

THE LONDON SEASON.

THIS season is not like most others that we have known. It has afforded a practical answer to the question why we English people have selected the most beautiful time of the year for abandoning our country houses and green retreats, and burying ourselves in the heart of a noisy, dusty, stuffy, burning city. The country is not green, and the town is not hot—not half as hot as it should be for comfort. It is all very well to talk of the romantic aspects of Nature; but surely since last Easter we have rather desiderated cheerful rooms and bright fires and genial assemblages of hearty people, with curtains drawn, and what is called "Nature" carefully excluded, than any tarrying by waterfalls, or coquetry at night with celestial phenomena. The nightingales have all suffered from sore throats: and some time back when I heard a cuckoo in Richmond Park attempting his usual monotonous call, it was done in so peevish a manner that I had not the heart to turn a four-penny-bit for luck's sake. How the people in Covent Garden have got their flowers it is difficult to say. I should rather have expected to see violets growing at Charing Cross, and primroses upon Ludgate Hill, than in the few fields and hedge-rows which it has been my misfortune to see during the last few months.

But, to speak the truth, even at ordinary times, when the terrestrial gases have not been mixed up in such universal hubbub as they have been during the last months of shipwreck, and hurricane, and deluge, when things which should be green are green, and when the ground is pied with daisies where daisies ought to be, and the white-thorns keep their fragrant appointments with the exactest punctuality,—these should rather be taken as relishes and contrasts to life in London during the London season, than as substitutes for all that London can show at such a time. With the best inclination to sympathise with all human pursuits, it is hard to see how a man, in order to employ himself most worthily, should avoid the society of his fellow men. Why should not a Londoner grow sentimental about Wardour Street as well as a Highland gentleman—I have no wish to twit him with his little peculiarities—about Glenlivat? As I walk about the streets of London—oftentimes by night—those dull brick houses are full of echoes of past days. I could tell you how the flutings lie on the marble mantel-pieces, and where the easy-chair on which the grandfather sits must be placed because it would not fit any other part of the room. There was the kindly welcome, and the ready jest, and the little tiffs, and the large reconciliations with the young ladies, and the plans for the coming season, and

all that makes life delightful to the feelings and the senses, and now all that is quite, quite gone ! Were I to knock at the door now, and race up the stairs as of old, Betty would be overcome, and the excellent head of the family inside would give me in charge on the suspicion of having a design against the great-coats and umbrellas. No poetry in London ! No poetry save a man is sitting and sneezing on a swab of wet moss—a Highland piper being at hand with one of those horrid instruments of torture applied to his hard, horny lips ! Why, one could write a sonnet about South Audley Street.

But if London at all times is better than any other place you could name, what is it not during the season, when every joy is at its climax, and when all your friends and acquaintances from all parts of the country, and from all parts of the continent, and from all parts of the world, come dropping in thick as guats used to be in summer evenings—when there were summer evenings, and there were guats. I know that some unneighbourly sort of people will have it that London is most delightful in September, when everybody is out of town, and the Hindu sweeper in Saint James's Square leaves off peddling with the unprofitable mud at his crossing, and, folding his arms across his breast, meekly gives in to Buddhism. Of course London is pleasant in September when the seat of empire is your own—but it is pleasant as sleep is after toil, or night after day. I like, as well as any man, to have the library in the club entirely to myself, and to moralise in the deserts of Old Bond Street, but human nature has also its social and its gorgeous side. I have a rich vein of duchesses in my mind, which I can open up during the London season. If ever there was a loiterer by old bookshops, and a lover of old crinkum-crankums of every kind, I am that idle, useless person : but of all the fair sights which the London streets can show, the fairest are those beautiful young maids and matrons who, as the season grows fervent, are drawn about in their triumphal cars by horses such as Greece never dreamed of, for all the testimony of her Elgin marbles. How all that human ingenuity could contrive, or human industry procure from all quarters of the globe, has been lavished on these Summer Queens ; and how they take it as a matter of course, as the rose does its fragrance, or the humming-bird the iridescence of its restless wings ! What a pity it would be if humanity could be at all mown down to a dead level like a lawn, and the heavens, in place of containing the greater and the lesser glories, were all lit up with myriads of farthing candles, all of equal dimness. The Londoner who has learned to enjoy his season properly, and to linger over its flavour, as a true scholar in wines would trifle with a beaded glass of amber Sauterne, and bless the Château-Yquem where it was cradled into sweetness, knows well what pleasures can be extracted from the mere contemplation of those more heroic exemplars of humanity who glide about the town in such Elysian guise. Archbishop Whately and the economists are right : you must have duchesses, that it may be well with the beggars ; but for poor Dives, who I pro-

test to my thinking, was somewhat hardly used, there would have been no broken victuals, no savoury scraps for starving Lazarus. But these are knotty points ;—we had best fall back on the London season.

I lay no great stress on that false start before Easter. It is but a foretaste, or rather a whet before the banquet ; indeed it might more aptly be compared to the tuning-up of the fiddle before Signor Costa takes his seat, and with one wave of his magic wand opens the Palace of Music at a blow. If any one should be disposed to take a little turn to the French capital before the occurrence of the Easter winter—of late years we have commonly had snow at that season—if there were not room for actual commendation, you would scarcely think him worthy of absolute blame. It is the time when second and third-rate singers establish their failures as facts on the operatic stage. It is the time when theatrical managers depend upon the fag-ends of worn-out themes, and try the patience of the public whilst they are burnishing up their tinsel and spangles for fresh and unwonted effects. It is a time when shabby-genteel people who but wish to spread a report about their vicinage that they have been up to London “for the season,” spend a fortnight or three weeks in town, and return to their usual and congenial hypocrisies, under the false impression that they are not found out. There is little good, and much bad about that false-birth, the London season before Easter. The real people will not keep open-houses for shadows. Those who constantly inhabit London, maintain the even tenor of their way, and will not suffer themselves to be drawn into demonstrations which can have no substantial results. The country pilgrims have not yet arrived. They wisely stop down in their own domains, and refuse to bear their part in an idle mockery. You may notice that this is the time chosen by the astuter shopkeepers for calling to their aid the skill of the house-painter and decorator. They have put their cleanings and burnishings off till the last moment, that they may show in full brilliancy when it is most needful to be brilliant. They know what can be accomplished in three weeks by a combination between inclement skies and London “blacks,” and will not make their running till the critical moment. Their gains before Easter are nothing but tributes from country cousins, not worthy of serious account.

When the real season has set in, it seems as though all persons who can do anything better than their fellows, in any quarter of the globe, had descended like a swarm of locusts upon the town. The Monsieurs, and the Signori, and the Herrs, flock to our shores with the hope of levying tribute from the Londoners in one form or another. One gentleman has a marvellous *ut de poitrine* ; another produces musical sounds by merely thumping his chin ; a third can do more in the conjuring way than has ever been thought possible before ; a fourth relies for success upon the intelligent action of a set of well trained poodles ; a fifth will cure all your ailments by throwing her- or him-self into a mesmeric condition, and prescribing apt remedies for your

infirmities ; a sixth will transport you in a trice to the banks of the Mississippi, or put on a pig-tail and a Chinese dress, and entertain you with characteristic songs whilst he takes you up and down the Yang-tse-Kiang in a couple of hours, and brings you home to dinner at the appointed time. Why should not a man like to spend eight or nine weeks in the midst of this Arabian Night's dream which mortals call the London season ? There is something for all ages, and all conditions of men. Whether you are a fat baby, and are rolled about in a perambulator—or a prosy old gentleman, and take your airings upon a steady cob—whether your heart's desire is for sugar-plums, or a good sleepy discussion of the Church Rate Question—you will find the means of gratifying it, better than you would do anywhere else, in London, when the season is at its height.

The season for very serious people is of course during the May Meetings at Exeter Hall, when so many clergymen and their healthy country-looking wives are to be seen about the Strand and Fleet Street. I have not one word to say against them, or their manner of ordering their lives ; but I am writing for those—I am one of them myself—who see no harm in spending an evening with “Norma,” or in idling throughout a summer evening in Hyde Park, and criticising the horses and their fair riders. Presently, we will waste a few minutes with them ; but I would first ask, in answer to the charge that it is a sin, or a mistake, to abandon the country at the season of the year when it is bursting into beautiful life, if this is really so ? What prevents us from riding about Richmond Park, or up the dark avenue of horse-chesnuts in Bushy Park, at our pleasure ? There are green lanes Hendon and Edgeware way ; there are pleasant heaths in Surrey within a riding distance. There are such events in the career of a Londoner during the season as little excursions to Gravesend and Greenwich. Show me, in any of the English counties, a fairer spot than Cobham Park with its ash trees and its deer leaping amongst the tall fern, while the Medway rolls beneath your feet ! He is not a judicious Londoner who, when the season is in full swing, does not steal away once and again for an afternoon up Thames, and spend it in sunny idleness under the shades of lordly Cliefden, or, still better, under the dark cool woods of Marlow. If you long for a whiff of sea-air, is not London situated on the Sussex coast ? Depart to our Brighton suburb, and when your nerves are re-strung come back to the heart of the town. Woodland, heath, river, sea, park, or common—they are all to be found in and about London, and are in their prime during the height of the season.

Besides, if any one has a licentious taste for floral joys, where can it be gratified so highly as in town ? I do not suppose that in any part of the world such floral exhibitions are to be seen as in London. The Directors of the Botanic Gardens in the Regent's Park and their yoke-fellows of the Crystal Palace will cater for your taste in this kind in a way which will outdo your expectations, or you must be hard, indeed, to please. Flora holds her Derby days and her Cup days in London, and if you care to assist at the Olympian struggles

of fruits and flowers, come to London during the season.

If, again, the inclination of your fancy be for painting, you must either be a connoisseur with a hobby, or a sneerer at your own country, or a professed critic, or, generally, a very uncomfortable sort of person, if you do not find much to afford you gratification ; and, indeed, far more than the critical stomach of most of us can digest in the three Exhibitions of the Royal Academy, of the Ancient Masters, and of the old Water Colourists. Of late years our French friends have also sent us a collection of pictures during the London season, which always contains some few note-worthy performances—now it is one of those marvellous Horse Fairs, or procession of Spanish Mules by Rosa Bonheur—now the Duel in the Snow after the Masked Ball ; but there is always something which will entertain and instruct you, if you are not wilfully resolved not to be instructed or entertained. There is a good week's occupation for a lover of pictures in the four exhibitions named—to make no mention of the more permanent galleries, such as those which contain the Turner and Sheepshanks Collections in the new buildings at South Kensington.

Do you care for music ? London, during the season, may be said to be the very Delphi of the musical world. The most famous singers, the most famous performers in Europe seek, and readily find, engagements at one or other of the London Opera Houses. When they have made their proofs elsewhere they come to us. If a London manager accepts them, and a London audience ratifies his choice, they have gained the blue ribbon of their art, and henceforth are “personages.” Besides the operas there are concerts innumerable, in which the most skilful pianists and violinists, of whom the world knows, are ready to put forth their full strength for your amusement. One year we have a Handel Festival, when the works of the great master are given in a style which would probably have astonished their author as much as he has contrived to astonish the world with the grandeur of his musical conceptions. Recently Germany sent us her Cologne Choir—last week we had amongst us the chosen members from amongst the French Orphéonistes. Whatever may have been the case in by-gone days, it is clear that, in our own, any musical fanatic might, with safety, leave Paris and Vienna, and Milan and Naples unvisited ; if his object be to gratify the most morbid craving for melody and harmony, let him come to London during the season.

Thus far we have spoken of a few heads of attraction—of beautiful women in such crowds that beauty ceases to be a distinction ; of some of the loveliest forms of English scenery, and by which London is surrounded ; of fruits and flowers ; of painting and of music. If any one cares for these things, or any of them, here they are to be found. But when you have said all this you have only spoken of the sensuous side of the London season. But one of the chief causes why that time is so delightful to a man of intelligent and energetic mind, is that then the nation is in its full intellectual stride. During the autumn

most of us—overworked men as most Londoners are—seek for recreation or relaxation on the continent, or at watering-places, or in the country; in the period which intervenes between the return to town and the commencement of the true season, each one is merely occupied with his own private affairs, but when the parliamentary season, which is identical in point of time with that which is commonly spoken of as the London season, has fairly set in, London is the clearing-house of the world. Whether one be in the right or in the wrong, one likes to assist at the discussion of the great questions which are *astir*. As long as one is upon this earthly stage it is as well to be an actor in the scene, and not a mere loungeur in the green-room, nor a critic before the curtain. It is very true, that at the present moment the immediate decision of mortal events seems to reside rather in Paris than in London; but the Parisians, or the French who go to Paris for their season, have marvellously little to do with the matter. England is the only country in Europe where a man can say what he likes, and write what he likes, about public affairs. London is the grand centre of political action, and London transacts its chief business in this kind, during the season.

So far of a few of the principal incidents of this delightful time; but we should also cast a glance at the number and sorts of people whose existence, in some cases, and well-being in all, depend upon the course which a London season may take. Let us think for a moment of the lodging-house keepers, and hair-dressers, and silk-mercers, and milliners, and seamstresses, and job-masters, and all persons who live in Bond Street and Regent Street and the neighbourhood of these localities, and all who depend upon them. Nay, whilst we are about it, why not give a thought to Manchester, and Coventry, and Lyons, and Bordeaux? for in all these famous towns the existence of the inhabitants will be found to be more or less bound up with the fortunes of the London season. The first question, of course, which a visitor to London is obliged to ask himself is, where he shall find “apartments;” for living in hotels is out of the question, save in the case of the very wealthy. I have often wondered what is the real origin of the London lodging-house keeper. From my own small experience of the class, I should say that they were all fallen stars—that they have, at a previous period of their career, before they took to letting lodgings, lived in great luxury and magnificence, but are now in “reduced circumstances.” They never appear to have mounted up the rungs of the social ladder until they attained the serene platform on which they could let lodgings calmly and be at peace. They have tumbled down upon the calling, as it were, from above. The fact, I suppose, is, that they suffer, poor people, from a morbid desire to assert their own dignity in the presence of their lodgers. You will commonly enough find two sisters following this pursuit: the eldest will do the bargaining and the necessary acts of severity about coals and extras, while the younger lady, a sort of faded beauty of seven-and-thirty, gives herself the airs which are necessary to support the consideration of the family. If you are a married man, or have ladies in your

party, it will be found extremely difficult to keep this gay young thing out of the “apartments” as soon as your own back is turned. Whenever you venture upon the smallest objections to any of the arrangements or charges, or wish to “get in” things on your own account, you are at once annihilated with the precedent of what Sir Roger This, or Colonel That, who had previously occupied the apartments, did under similar circumstances. Both the baronet and the gallant officer in question invariably proceeded upon the principle of unbounded confidence in the ladies of the house, and found themselves the better for it. As a general rule, I am sorry to say, that our London lodging-house keepers much prefer letting to gentlemen. Ladies, they say, stop at home a great deal, and are always ringing the bells. I suspect, moreover, that the feminine mind is more impatient of small pilfering, and not so easily moved by a passing reference to Sir Roger and the Colonel. On the whole, however, these poor people must have a hard struggle of it in the world; in most cases their “apartments” do little more for them than keep a roof over their heads, and a loaf on their boards; so that we should not be too critical on their little attempts at over-charging during the season. What a weary time it must be for them when London is out of town, and what days of frightful excitement when the season is just beginning, and the furniture is furnished up, and the anti-macassars are scattered about with no niggard hand, and the bills are in the windows, and the black silk gown and best cap are put on, and they can do no more! As they sit behind the blinds, and watch the passers-by, what a keen insight they must have into their business and objects! They must be able to detect at a glance a family-man in search of lodgings, and even to infer from the expression of his face if he is likely to require an extra bed-room. How their hearts must beat as he pauses opposite the window, half crosses over, and then walks on without ringing! But if he does ring, and Betsy at that moment is gone out for the beer!

The establishments of the leading milliners are pre-eminently dependent upon the fortunes of the London season. The fates of the producers and consumers of dress are very different during this period. It is not a pleasant thing to think of the contrast between the fortune of the poor girl who sits up all night to work at the ball-dress that it may be sent home in time—and that of the young lady who sits up all night to wear it. Do not let us therefore indulge in vulgar sentimentality, and groan over the caprices and selfishness of the queen of the ball-room. If that young person will but give her orders in time, and pay her bill in due season, she is not to be blamed because Madame Haradan Jones works short-handed. The real mischief lies in the suddenness of the order which disturbs the arrangements of Madame H. J., and in the non-payment of the accounts which cripples her resources, and prevents her from making those arrangements on a sufficiently liberal scale. Still, I wish that a milliner's work-room, at about 2 A.M., were esteemed one of the lions or lionesses of London, and that my bright little butterfly friends—the Lucys, and

Fannys, and Marys—were taken occasionally to see a laboratory of this description. The room is generally “stuffy,”—you will find in it two or more long tables with twenty or so sleepy girls stitching away like so many machines. They have just had some strong tea to keep them awake, for there is to be a fête, or a ball, or something of that sort the next day, and the work must be done. At the end of each table there sits a sort of superior officer—a lady maturely young—one of whom presides over the destinies of the caps and bonnets; the other, over those of the gowns and dresses;—this last one “cuts out.” They are generally remarkable for severity of temper during office hours, and with a stern tap of the thimble, and a “*Now, young ladies!*” instantly repress any feeble attempt at conversation which may be made by the poor girls in their several departments. I suppose it is necessary, but it does seem hard to prevent them from talking,—they must have such a deal to say. At the millinery-table some of the young people are working on paste-board heads which seem invariably to have lost their noses. They all look up in a subdued way, because, at that moment, Madame H. J. herself has entered the room with an expression of bland philanthropy on her amiable features, which, as they know by painful experience is the invariable preface to a suggestion, that they should sit up an hour or two longer than usual to “get through” the work. This suggestion is generally offered in a playful way at first, but the young ladies know very well that a sterner mask can be put on if Madame’s hilarity does not receive a cheerful response. By all means let us sit up and enjoy ourselves!

There is a contrast to this picture next day at the fancy fair, held in the grounds of Strawberry Lodge, Twickenham, for the benefit of let us say “The Indigent Governesses Asylum.” Behind that stand, and actually engaged in the wicked attempt to make a stout Archdeacon purchase a pink paper thing for catching flies, you may see the bold but fascinating Lady Dalilah Stopall. She has succeeded. The venerable gentleman has deposited a sovereign in payment, and looks to have the change returned; but this saucy lady informs him with a laugh, that she never gives change at her establishment. His consort, a tall, grim, monumental looking matron, is biting her thin lips with vexation, and looks as if she would give him a little bit of her mind to-night upon the subject of his improvident bargain. The two children ask, “What papa will do with it?” as he holds his flimsy purchase up, and is evidently puzzled how to get off the stage with dignity. “Catch flies, darlings!” says Lady D. S. with an impertinence and levity of manner which the two young officer-looking men in the mandarin hats evidently deplore. Well, Lady Dalilah has on the very identical dress which was the result of Mrs. Haradan Jones’s playful suggestion to her young people on the previous night. The suggestion was dropped at 12:30 A.M., and by 11 A.M. that curious system of small flounces which constitutes a modern dress was punctually delivered at 521, Charles Street, Berkeley Square, and is now at Strawberry Lodge.

If, being a man, you want any practical test beyond the general appearance of Old Bond Street, of whether the London Season is on or not, go to Matchwell’s in the Arcade; and if you have any hair, get it cut. In the season you have to wait for your turn, while all the gentlemen, with “knees” on their heads, are getting trimmed and essenced, and greased and brushed. How I envy that young dog with a head like a mop! How astonished the artiste looks who is called upon to cut the hair of that bullet-headed gentleman who has but two little tufts left just above his ears: his astonishment, however, is but of short duration, and as he takes comb and scissors in hand, he asks in the usual routine way, “Would you like much off, sir?” If there were a grain of irony in his tone, the bullet-headed gentleman, who is an enormously powerful man, would knock him down without a moment’s hesitation; but there is no room for picking a quarrel, so the visitor replies, in a manner equally formal, that he would rather have the operation repeated, for he might take cold if much hair were removed at once. The tiresome people, when you are waiting for your turn, are the gentlemen who insist upon having their heads washed. A fashionable hair-dresser’s establishment is one of the best places you can visit if you want to ascertain about the ebb and flow of the London Season.

Another fair proof that town is full is the aspect of St. James’s Street, and the part of Pall Mall which contains the clubs. I wonder what those dear old gentlemen in the bow-windows of the old clubs into which Gamma and his kind never venture to intrude a profane foot can possibly find to talk about. There they are, year after year,—they never dream of shifting their quarters to another world—gazing complacently at the passers-by with newspapers spread upon their knees, and interchanging remarks upon things in general. Nothing seems to move or excite them—they are calm and serene even when Europe is in flames, or the Jews are let into Parliament. I think I should like to be as one of them for a quarter of an hour. Their heads must be so cool. What must a man feel like who has never been called upon for any exertion, save for his own pleasure, for three-score years and ten? It is a sensation of which one would like to have some practical experience. You never see a hub-bub and turmoil round the doors of their clubs, as in the case of the more noisy and excitable establishments in Pall Mall during the London season.

But of all the glorious sights, during that famous period, give me the Ride in Hyde Park, known to mortals as Rotten Row. I do not think that the great London spectacle was improved last year by the removal of the band from Kensington Gardens to the end of the Ride near Apsley House. It may be that one is under the influence of old feelings. Sentiment is essentially Tory. As we look back—ah! it is now years and years ago—to the golden time when the fair horse-women were as goddesses, and our hearts were in our mouths as we drew near that old elm tree where they sate upon their steeds—lovely, transcendental, and in chimney-pot hats—we do not love to see our old associations disturbed. As

a stout and elderly friend observed to me the other day—the mind never loses its figure! Was it not there that *she* burst upon our astonished vision for the first time? Was it not there that three weeks afterwards, and on the day subsequent to the assembly at old Lady Dandelion's, when *she* had glanced at us looks of encouragement, as we supposed, over two strawberry-creams of which we were then partaking—(alas! strawberry-creams don't taste like that now-o'-days—they are deficient in flavour)—we met her again, and there she distinctly flicked her bay mare "Joddles" three times in a way that betrayed her sweet confusion at our presence? Alas! again, I say, my friends, why continue this chapter of painful reminiscences? Were we not, what our French neighbours would call *éconduits*, because a doubt seemed to exist in the paternal mind, whether we could warrant sufficient supplies of nectar and ambrosia for the consumption of the Nymph whilst she adhered to the crust of the planet? Alas! once more were we not consulted by that very Nymph, the other day, upon the propriety of sanctioning a union between her daughter Angelina and the youthful Edwin who enjoys a certain amount of the confidence of his Sovereign as a clerk in the Foreign Office, and did we not reply that the match would be an imprudent one, and that Angelina could do better? Horrible!—most horrible! The corner by the Gardens there is thick with recollections of this kind; I cannot shift my quarters to the other end of the ride with any degree of complacency. When the Band performed in the open, there was no friendly shade under which the Edwins and Angelinas of the present day could exchange furtive glances, whilst the Papas pulled out their watches and calculated the interval between that time and the dinner-hour. In one respect, indeed, the change was far better, for surely the long rows of seats which were then placed both along the Ride and Drive were a great convenience to the ladies who wished to take the air and see the horse-folks, as well as to the gentlemen who wished to gaze upon them with respectful awe. To be sure, we then lost the Watteau-like picture of the promenaders in Kensington Gardens; but I think it was an advantage that the ladies had "deployed into line." Young volunteers, is the phrase a correct one—and such as would be used by you military men? I rejoice to see that the Band has now been moved back to its old place. In another respect, too, a change has come over the Ride since the times I have been describing. We have now three distinct sets of riders, some take their exercise or pastime in the morning, some at noon, some in the evening. Most commonly they are lawyers, and City people, and political men who are to be found in the Ride, before breakfast, proceeding up and down on hard-trotting horses, and endeavouring to cram the exercise of two hours into one. Then we have a large batch of riders, more or less mixed up with fashionable life, who find it more convenient to get the ride over before luncheon, so that they may not be fatigued for their dinner-parties and their operas in the evening. Besides these two earlier batches we have the later riders who adhere to

the good old customs of their forefathers and foremothers, and take their pleasure in the ride between five and seven P.M. during the London Season. Perhaps it is as well that the company is thus divided, because, in consequence of the enormous increase of wealth as well as of inhabitants of London and visitors, there really would scarcely be room for all—if all were to ride at once. As it is the place is crowded, and when the season is at its height I should like to see either the Bois de Boulogne, or the Champs Elysées, or the Thiergarten, or the Prater attempt rivalry with the famous Ride in Hyde Park.

An observer of a philosophical turn of mind might find abundant food for reflection in the hats worn by the ladies. I confess I am not without a sneaking partiality for the Spanish-looking hat and black feathers. Very young ladies may try a bird's wing, for a girl's face will come out victorious of almost any trial to which it may be put. But I would not recommend my stout friend Mrs. Mompesson Todd to mount a pheasant's pinion. The white feathers are too conspicuous, and as a rule are not becoming, nor are the blues and reds to be violently commended. The hat masculine again, when worn upon the lovely heads of certain fair beings before whom the hearts of the spectators quail, is a dangerous weapon of offence, and ought to be put down by the police. Upon some faces, indeed, it is perfectly harmless, and therefore interference on the part of the public authorities would be superfluous. I rejoiced last year to see that the dainty little tails to the jackets of the habits have been once more permitted to the Nymphs in substitution for those flopping paletôt sort of things which made slight Nymphs look stout, and stout Nymphs stouter. But what a wonderful sight the Ride is during the season. You have scarcely recovered your breath from the effect of one vision which has cantered past, when four come on a-breast under the guardianship of two tall wretches with violent whisks. Then the little gentleman with the tippet—may his shadow never be less!—trots past on his lean horse, and gives time for the restorative agencies of nature to come again into play. Look at that young girl who is cantering past with her feather streaming in the wind, and the bronzed-looking youth upon a pulling, tearing chesnut mare by her side, who is whispering something in her ear—can't you guess what it is about?—how divinely happy she looks! Then four gentlemen in a row trot by you, whose names are famous wherever the English language is spoken, and they are chattering and giggling like a parcel of school-boys. There is no attempt there at melo-dramatic heroism. Next there passes a curious stout mau upon a curious stout horse, which canters along in an emphatic way, and gets over the ground at about the rate of four miles an hour upon a liberal computation. That is the celebrated hobby-horse of the Hyde Park Ride. If my space were not contracting so rapidly, I should like to have said a word about the lovely little children—*Angeli non Angli*—with the long silken hair, who are there amongst their elders, upon the rough ponies, which look so full of fun that you would almost expect to hear them neigh-

ing out jokes at each other. That little fellow in Knickerbockers on the Shetland is distinctly laying down the law in a masculine sort of way to the little lady with the partridge wing on the grey pony, who bursts out laughing at him, and brings him to a sense of his situation in true feminine style—for all the world as her sister Ellen, just out of her teens, would do with the

Colonel if he gave himself airs. My young friend, you are imbibing learning of the most valuable kind—attention to your dear governess!

Well, I say that all this is very pleasant—one amongst the pleasant things of London during the season. Nor are the stroll home and the London dinners disagreeable. Should you by hard fate be compelled to go and hear the final strains of



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Madame Grisi, or the fresh warblings of the Hungarian Csillag, at a later period of the evening, I should not be very ready to bewail your misfortune. The danger is, that a man may not know London and the felicities of the London season well until he has exhausted half the term of his pilgrimage. Happy is he who has so carefully arranged his life, that when it is half exhausted, he has surrounded himself with friends, in whose houses he can find a pleasant smile and a hearty welcome; and this is only possible in London. In the country, with enormous wealth at your disposal, you can indeed fill your house with

friends, but, *non cuivis*, we are not all born with golden ladles in our mouths. Besides, be as rich as you will, you can offer your friends a good deal, but you cannot place a London at their disposal, nor are they free agents as long as they are guests at your house. It is better to be in London, and to be free, and to look up the pleasant people as you feel a thirst for their presence. Under ordinary circumstances nothing is duller, as far as society is concerned, than country life in England; and out of England it can scarcely be said to exist. Whatever they may be to the natives of the countries, foreign capitals are to

English people but as watering-places,—delightful for a time, but in the long run poor substitutes for London during the season.

Vanitas vanitatum! omnia vanitas! may be the remark of some dismal person upon what has here been written of London. It may be so; and if it is so, let us make the best of it. I distinctly like vanities of all kinds, and more especially those which involve the society of the most intelligent and pleasant of my fellow-creatures, and an enjoyment of the highest forms of art and literature, and the spectacle of the full-swelling tide of human life. Let us leave Tityrus and Melibæus to their goats and their hexameters if they like them; but let us rather take our stand at Charing Cross. Above all, let as many of us as delight in the sight of happy human faces, come to London—during the season.

GAMMA.